

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 828

PS 014 415

TITLE Early Childhood Services.
 INSTITUTION Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne (Australia).
 PUB DATE Sep 83
 NOTE 88p.; Submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services.
 AVAILABLE FROM Editor, Institute of Family Studies, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, 3000, Victoria, Australia (no price quoted).
 PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - General (140)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Day Care; Day Care Centers; Delivery Systems; *Early Childhood Education; Employed Women; Family Day Care; *Family Structure; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Preschool Education; *Public Policy; *Social Change; *Social Development; Young Children
 IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

Supplemented with 20 tables of data, this discussion focuses on the changing environment of Australian families and society. Specifically offered are descriptions of child care arrangements, a rationale for children's services, and policy suggestions. With respect to child care arrangements, it is noted that the family environment has been altered by a rapid rise in the incidence of divorce, a sharp increase in paid work for mothers in two-parent families, and a shortening of the stage of childbearing. Fewer siblings are in the home due to the drop in fertility. For a majority of families, regardless of their circumstances, the use of some form of child care is a normal part of the weekly routine, with informal arrangements being the most expensive and the most used form of service. While very few families have access to organized child care services, use of preschools and center-based care by those who do differs according to family type. With regard to a rationale for early childhood services, the discussion suggests the importance of such services for children's social development. In particular, this rationale asserts that, since social development is educational, child care is inherently educational. With respect to recommendations for public policy, it is suggested that policies first focus on the nature, level of provision, and organization of children's services and next concern themselves with the relative responsibilities that various levels of government should undertake to ensure development of a comprehensive system. (RH)

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Submission to the Victorian Government Review ^B
of Early Childhood Services

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Early Childhood Services

*Submission to the Victorian Government Review
of Early Childhood Services*



INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES
September 1983

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INTRODUCTION

Human society perpetuates itself in and through its children. They are the legacy of its past and present and the bridge to the future. Their numbers, location and circumstances mark the level of our progress and development today, and directly shape the world of tomorrow. As the child foreshadows the adults, its status and nurture is a sensitive indication of the quality of life in our societies and a reflection of our individual and collective values, hopes and aspirations. (Mottale, McHale, and Streatfield, 1979).

The quality of life in Australian society in the 1980s if measured by the level of commitment to children's services, must surely be cause for concern, if not alarm. The Victorian Government's review of early childhood services presents an opportunity to restate the many cogent arguments in favour of a wide range of readily available, affordable services for families with young children. The Australian Institute of Family Studies is of the view that the provision of adequate levels of such services is essential if the well-being of many thousands of families is to be enhanced and if the problems and pressures facing thousands more are to be alleviated. The Institute is also of the view that national, social and economic recovery cannot be achieved fully if strenuous efforts are not made to upgrade what was always an inadequate system into a comprehensive and well resourced network of children's services.

Few people would dispute that we live in a society where parents must increasingly rely on others for help and support in raising their children. In a sense parents have had to take on something like an executive rather

than a direct function in regard to their children, choosing communities, schools, doctors and special programs that will leave their children in the best possible hands. The lives parents are leading, and the lives for which they are preparing their children, are so demanding and complex that the parents cannot have, and so often do not want, traditional kinds of direct supervision of their children. And although most of these changes have come about because of changes in our social and economic system, not because of the selfishness or immorality or negligence of individual parents, the extraordinary thing is that the myth of self-sufficient family persists. (Kenneth Keniston, 1977:12.)

The Institute regards as dangerous nonsense the view that families must bear the full responsibility of providing for their members in an advanced industrial society such as Australia in the 1980s. Nowhere has this view been more in evidence than in the patchwork of policies that affect the child rearing responsibilities of families. Families with children have fared worst of any household type in taxation arrangements, with large families attracting the greatest penalties (Saunders, 1982). The groups most affected by poverty in Australia are families containing children, the most vulnerable being one-parent families. The severe retraction of public housing in recent years falls most heavily on low-income families with children, detached housing being available only to large families. Cuts in government spending in other areas have had a proportionately greater effect on families with children as resources have been directed away from public health and education programs. Finally, the meagre sums spent on child care and other family support services by both State and Federal governments have placed Australia well behind countries with which it is often compared. In places such as Sweden, France, Germany, Denmark and

Israel, policies have been developed which recognise the importance of children's services to both the well-being of families and the alleviation of economic and sex-based inequality.

DEFINITIONS AND EMPHASIS

While the Institute appreciates the importance of concentrating attention on the need for early childhood services, those designed for children up to the age of 6 years, it is important not to overlook the need for services to a broader age range such as after or before school care, and the inter-relationship between early childhood services and these other areas. Of Australian families with children under 12 years, nearly half (47.8 per cent) have all their children at school, while more than a quarter (27.7 per cent) have all their children below school age. Even if day care services for pre-schoolers were improved, it could be that those families with some or all their children at school would be unable to benefit by such improvements.

The Institute is also mindful of the need for attention to be paid to a broader range of issues relating to children such as child protection, the rights of children under the law, family law matters, foster care and the range of programs such as family support services, care in women's refuges and so on. While mention will be made of some of these areas in this submission, the Institute has not been able to consider all of them equally. Those areas that this submission will concentrate on most will be those of the provision of day care and the inter-relationship between day care and pre-school services.

Under the term 'day care services', the Institute includes all centre-based care undertaken in full (or part) day care centres, day nurseries, child minding centres, child care centres or creches. The distinction is made between commercial or for-profit centres, and not-for-profit centres, whether they be

run by local government, community co-operatives or places of business or employment. The distinction is also made between centre-based care and family day care. Family day care is a form of supervised, home-based care in which women care for children in their own homes and are supported by regular visits from trained staff. The Institute accepts that this use of the term day care embraces a wide range of services and widely varying standards of care could be encompassed. It is also accepted that other forms and other modes of care can be regarded as part of day care. Such other services include occasional or casual care, playgroups, toy libraries, mobile units, etc.

For the purposes of this submission, day care services are to be compared with pre-school kindergarten services and private or informal care arrangements. Under the term pre-school services are included those programs which cater for children in the year before school entry. Children at these centres at present attend for between three and eight half-day sessions per week. Pre-schools or kindergartens are usually staffed by trained personnel and operate during school terms only, and while some provide care from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., this is comparatively rare.

Private or informal care refers to the care given by relatives, friends, neighbours or private individuals in informal, unlicensed arrangements. While much of this care is unpaid, the quality may vary from abysmally poor to perfectly adequate.

Basically the Institute's view regarding these three forms of care - day care, pre-school and private care - is that pre-school programs should be offered as part of a range of children's services and integrated with those services which are included under the term day care. Families should be in the position of being able to choose those private arrangements that suit their needs as a supplement to readily available child care services, and not be dependent upon informal arrangements regardless of their quality.

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT OF FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Changes are occurring within family structures and within the Australian community that must be accounted for in the design of children's services. They affect both the level and the nature of the provision of services and while new service types may only be needed in relatively few areas, changes in government policy in some of the current programs will only stem from changes in thinking about family and economic needs.

Changes in Family Types

In Victoria in 1982 there were approximately 545,000 families containing dependent children (ABS, Australian families, 1982). Families with dependent children represented 53.1 per cent of all families in Australia, a proportion that has been steadily falling over the past decade or so (ABS, Census 1981). One parent families containing dependent children represented 7.3 per cent of all families in Australia in 1982, and 13.2 per cent of all families with dependent children (see Table 2). In Victoria there were at least 37,600 one-parent families with dependent children (ABS, Australian families, 1982).

While the proportion of all families containing children seems to be remaining relatively steady, the size of families has been generally reduced to only two children (Borrie, 1981).

First children are being born later in marriages (3.3 years after marriage in 1981 compared to 1.6 years in 1971) and subsequent births are occurring much closer together. As a result, the time span of childbearing and rearing takes up only a small proportion of a woman's lengthening life span, opening up the opportunity to combine both career and parenthood.

TABLE 1: Family types in Australia

Family Type	1969 (1)		1981 (2)	
	('000)	%	('000)	%
All families	3176	100.0	3878	100.0
Married couple families (3)	2867	90.2	3390	87.2
With dependent children	1702		1860	
No dependent children	1164		1529	
One-parent families with dependent children	131	4.1	282	7.3
Male head	23		45	
Female head	108		237	
Other families with no dependent children	179	5.6	216	5.5
Male head	52		53	
Female head	127		163	
All families with dependent children	1833	100.0	2142	100.0
Married couple families with dependent children	1702	92.9	1860	86.8
One-parent families with dependent children	131	7.1	282	13.2
Australian population aged 15 and over			19909	100.0
Individuals not family members	n.a.		1656	15.2
Family members as percentage of total population	n.a.			84.8

Sources: ABS Income Distribution 1968/69

ABS Labour Force Status and other characteristics of families, July 1981

Notes: Includes de facto marriages

n.a. = not available

The increase in the number of one-parent families in Australia may be attributed largely to the increase in the number of divorces and separations. Since 1966 the crude divorce rate has increased from 8 per 10,000 population to 28 per 10,000 (See Table 2.3). Divorce is taking place earlier in marriage, the median duration of dissolved marriages being 10.2 years in 1981. The greatest proportion of these were marriages of under 5 years duration representing 20.8 per cent of dissolutions. It is important to note, however, that an increasing number of these divorces within five years of marriage are of remarried people.

TABLE 2: Divorces in Australia

		Rate (per 10,000 population)	Median duration of marriages (yrs.) median	Divorced within 5 years of marriage
	Divorces			
1966	9 921	8	13.9	7.9
1975	24 307	18	11.6	9.9
1976	63 267	46	11.0	15.5
1979	37 854	26	10.3	20.1
1981	41 412	28	10.2	20.8

Source: ABS, Divorces Australia, 1976 and 1981.

A total of 325,704 children under the age of 18 have been affected by divorce between 1976 and 1981 (Table 3). In 1980, 459,200 dependent children were living with one parent rather than two.

TABLE 3: Children of divorce

Year	Percentage of cases involving children	Total number of dependent children involved	Total dissolutions
1971	67.5	18 451	13 002
1972	66.8	22 172	15 707
1973	67.7	23 078	16 266
1974	68.3	25 505	17 744
1975	67.6	34 992	24 307
1976	62.7	73 645	63 267
1977	63.7	57 878	45 150
1978	63.1	51 599	40 608
1979	61.3	46 130	37 854
1980	60.6	46 836	39 258
1981	61.6	49 616	41 412

Source: ABS Divorces Australia 1978, 1981
ABS Social Indicators No.3

In the U.S.A., Bane (1976) estimates that one-third of all children have separated parents, and that fifty per cent of U.S. children are likely to spend an average of 5 - 6 years in a one-parent home. Against the background of the increasing numbers of remarriages, a much larger proportion of Australian children will be raised in households in which one of the adults is not their biological parent. In 1982, one in eight two-parent families were of this type (ABS Australian families 1982).

The importance of all these trends for child care policies is that the environment in which child rearing takes place has undergone dramatic change. Alternatives to a pattern of child care predicted on the unpaid labour of women at home are a

fundamental necessity in Australia right now and into the future. With smaller families, older siblings and/or female relatives such as aunts, cousins and grandmothers are less available to look after small children in the case of a mother in the paid labour market or for any other circumstance. The increased incidence of divorce and separation and the consequent rise in the number of single parent families greatly increases the need for provision of child care facilities. For single parents, for women in families with low incomes and for married women whose children were born well into their marriage, close together and are soon to be at school, the requirement to find places in the paid workforce is very strong and in many cases, compelling.

Families and work

The most significant social change has been in the nature of the relationship between families and the workplace. What has affected the need for better children's services has of course been the extent to which mothers have changed their labour force status. Table 4 indicates that of all families with dependent children in Australia, 45.3 per cent had both parents (in the case of married couple families) or the parent (in the case of one-parent families), in the paid labour force in 1981. Of all families with dependent children, 9.6 per cent had no adult in paid work.

TABLE 4: Labour force participation of families, Australia,
June 1981

Family type	Not in		In labour force			
	labour force		1 spouse		2 spouses	
	000's	(%)	000's	(%)	000's	(%)
<u>Married couple -</u>						
with dependent children	61.4	1.6	965.9	24.8	833.1	21.4
without dependent children	528.4	13.6	447.8	11.5	553.2	14.2
<u>Male head -</u>						
with dependent children	5.5	0.1	39.9	1.0	n.a.	n.a.
without dependent children	19.6	0.5	33.7	0.9	n.a.	n.a.
<u>Female head -</u>						
with dependent children	139.3	3.6	97.6	2.5	n.a.	n.a.
without dependent children	115.0	3.0	47.5	1.2	n.a.	n.a.
TOTAL	3887.7	(100)	869.2	22.4	1632.4	42.0
					1386.3	35.6

n.a. : not available

Source: ABS Labour Force Status and other characteristics of Families, Australia, June, 1981

Table 5 shows that of the total family units in Australia with children under 12 years of age just over half (52.2 per cent) contain at least one child who is under school age and therefore potentially in need of child care services. In 38.2 per cent of families both parents were employed, in 16.3 per cent both parents were full-time and 21.6 per cent one parent was full-time and one part-time. There were 1,034,000 children under 12 years of age in these families, or 35.8 per cent of all children under 12 years including 282,700 of those not at school. Of those

family units with at least one child not at school, 58.6 per cent have only one parent who is employed and one who is at home, while 27.3 per cent of these families have both parents employed either full or part-time.

Consequently, in the case of the large numbers of families with all parents working, child care services are essential for family incomes to be maintained. For a disturbingly high proportion of families with children, no adult is working (11.2 per cent) and the absence of adequate child care may well be a factor inhibiting entry to the labour force for many of these parents.

TABLE 5: Family units with children under 12 years, Australia, June 1980

	Families with all children not attending school (a) (000) %		Families with some children at school, some not at school (b) (000) %		Families with one or more children not at school (a+b) (000) %		Families with all children at school (000) %		Total children (000) %	
Family Type										
Two parent families					768.8	47.6	664.7	41.2		
One parent					73.4	4.5	105.6	6.5		
						52.2		47.8		
Birth Place										
Parents Australian born					524.0	32.5	470.1	29.1		
At least one NES parent					177.3	11.0	170.5	10.6		
ES Migrant					118.3	7.3	115.9	7.2		
Others					22.7	1.4	13.7	0.9		
						52.2		47.8		
Family Work Status										
* All parents employed F/T	46.6	2.9	37.3	2.3	83.9	5.2	183.8	11.4	415.5	14.4
One employed, one not	264.2	16.4	229.3	14.2	493.5	30.6	287.1	17.8	1471.6	50.9
All parents employed, one P/T	67.4	4.2	78.4	4.9	145.8	9.0	201.9	12.5	618.5	21.4
All unemployed or not in L.F.	57.7	3.6	38.8	2.4	96.5	6.0	83.7	5.2	318.7	11.0
Not determined	11.2	0.7	11.3	0.7	22.5	1.4	13.7	0.8	58.5	2.0
Total	447.1	27.7	395.1	24.5	842.2	52.2	770.3	47.8	2882.8	99.7

Notes:

Total Australian family units containing children under 12 years = 1,612,500

NES = Not English Speaking; ES = English Speaking; L.F. = Labour Force

F/T = full-time P/T = part-time

* 'All parents' includes the parent in one-parent families.

Another change that has occurred during the last decade in the employment status of persons responsible for children under the age of 12 years (mostly women) can be ascertained from Table 6. In 1969, 28.0 per cent of persons responsible for care of a child or children were in employment but by 1980 that proportion rose to 39.6 per cent. The numbers of persons who were employed and who were responsible for children increased by 60.7 per cent. (Sweeney and Jamrozik, 1982).

TABLE 6: Employment status of persons responsible for children under 12 years of age, Australia, 1980

Year/Employment Status	Persons Responsible		Children (1)	
	N(000)	%	N(000)	%
<u>May 1969:</u>				
Employed	397.3	28.0	679.0	25.5
Not employed (2)	1019.7	72.0	1980.5	74.5
Total	1417.0	(100)	2659.7	(100)
<u>May 1973:</u>				
Employed	522.5	34.0	894.1	31.6
Not employed (2)	1013.5	66.0	1933.8	68.4
Total	1536.0	(100)	2827.9	(100)
<u>May 1977:</u>				
Employed	577.6	37.1	983.6	35.0
Not employed (2)	977.1	62.9	1823.8	65.0
Total	1554.8	(100)	2807.4	(100)
<u>June 1980:</u>				
Employed	638.5	39.6	1061.3	37.5
Not employed	974.0	60.4	1768.5	62.5
Total	1612.5	(100)	2829.8	(100)
<u>Change 1969-1980: (%)</u>				
Employed	+60.7	+41.4	+56.3	+47.1
Not employed	- 4.5	-16.1	-10.7	-16.1
Total	+13.9	-	+ 6.4	-

Source: Child Care Arrangements Australia, June 1980; ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 12

Notes: (1) Families indicating number of children as "three or more", have been counted as having three children
(2) Comprises unemployed persons and those not in the workforce.

The reason for the above situation is clear. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of women in the labour force increased by 508,000, an increase of 28.2 per cent. Their participation rate increased from 40 to 44.3 per cent, a 10.6 per cent increase. By contrast, the participation rate of men has decreased by a factor of 6.1 per cent over the same period. (ABS, The Labour Force Australia, 1981.)

Of all employed married women, part-time workers comprise about 40 per cent. Indeed the major growth area in employment has been in part-time work. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of women employed part-time increased by 78.2 per cent. The lack of adequate child care arrangements is one of the reasons women seek part-time employment, even though it is usually characterised by low security and few of the rights enjoyed by full-time workers such as superannuation, sick leave and long-service leave. Further examination of Table 5 illustrates the impact of having at least one child not at school on the type of labour force participation families are forced to choose. Table 7, taken from Table 5, shows that of those families where both parents were employed, over half (56.5 per cent) had one parent working part-time. The presence of a child not at school increases the likelihood that one parent will be a part-time worker. Of those families with at least one child not at school, 63.5 per cent had one part-time worker, while for those with all children at school 52.1 per cent of families are characterised this way. The contrast is starker for those families with some children at school and some not at school where just over twice as many families (67.8 per cent) have one parent working part-time as have both parents employed full-time (32.2 per cent).

TABLE 7: Work status of family units with children under 12 years, Australia, 1981

Employment Status	All children not attending school (000) %	Some children at school, some not at school (000) %	At least one child not at school (000) %	All children at school (000) %	Total (000) %
*All parents employed F/T	46.6 40.9	37.3 32.2	83.9 36.5	183.8 47.9	267.7 43.5
All parents employed, one P/T	67.4 59.1	78.4 67.8	145.8 63.5	201.9 52.1	347.7 56.5
TOTAL	114	115.7	229.7	385.7	615.4 100.0

Note: * 'All parents' includes the parent in one-parent families.

F/T = full-time P/T = part-time

The impact of the age of children on women's labour force participation is again clearly demonstrated in Table 8. In Victoria, only 36.3 per cent of parents (mainly mothers) responsible for children under school age worked at all, compared with 57.1 per cent of those with all school-aged children (aged 6-11).

TABLE 8: Labour force participation rates of persons responsible for pre-school and primary school aged children by States and Territories, Australia, June 1980

Labour Force Participation Rate				
	Responsible only for children under 6 years	Responsible for children aged 6-11 years and some under 6 years	Responsible only for children aged 6 to 11 years	Responsible for any children under 12 years
New South Wales	32.7	47.7	55.5	42.0
Victoria	36.3	51.1	57.1	45.2
Queensland	31.1	47.1	54.6	41.2
South Australia	31.5	45.9	53.8	41.2
Western Australia	33.8	49.8	57.1	43.5
Tasmania	30.0	44.4	50.0	37.9
Northern Territory	43.3	66.3	70.2	52.7
A.C.T.	33.3	60.0	73.4	48.4
Australia	33.6	48.8	56.1	42.9

Source: ABS Child Care Arrangements, Australia, June 1980
Cat. No. 4402, p.19

Table 9 shows how the trend has grown since 1969 for mothers of young children to enter the labour market once their children became of school-age.

TABLE 9: Labour force participation for persons (%) responsible for children under the age of 12, by age groups, Australia

	Participation rate in labour force (percentage)				
	May 1969	1973	1977	June 1980	Increase 1969-80
Persons (mainly mothers) with children					
- under 6 years	22	27	33	33	50
- 6-11 only	42	50	54	56	33
- under 12 years	29	35	40	43	48
All women	38	41	44	45	18

Source: ABS Child Care arrangements 1969, 1973, 1977, 1980.

While other factors are at work, one of the main reasons so many women find jobs once their children are at school, and not before, is because of the lack of child care available to them. The most recent study of discouraged workers in Australia has shown that 120,000 women would like a job if child care were available. A further 253,900 women stated that 'family considerations' was a major reason they were not actively seeking work. (ABS Persons not in the labour force, Cat. No. 6220.0).

The importance of women in the workforce

It should by now be accepted in Australian society that the old cliches about women 'having to work' or just wanting 'pin money' are crude generalisations about why women seek paid employment. Women work for all the reasons men do. Several times during our recent history women have been actively encouraged into the workforce to meet shortfalls in labour, both skilled and unskilled. Under present economic circumstances, with high levels of unemployment and inflation combined with inadequate levels of income support, extra income brought into the family by a woman's wage is essential for many households.

The impact of a second wage can be quite dramatic. An ABS survey shows that a married couple family can increase its income by 57 per cent if the woman works part-time and by 82 per cent if she works full-time. More significantly, a single parent family can increase its income by 110 per cent if the parent works part-time and by 176 per cent if s/he works full-time.*

The woman's earnings can be of crucial importance, therefore, in enabling the family to meet house repayments and to stay above the poverty line. In 1975 the Henderson Poverty Inquiry found that the number of families in poverty would double if wives did not work. The 1978-79 ABS Income Survey data show that there were 126,400 married couple families with dependent children receiving incomes less than \$7000 p.a., the poverty line for a couple with two children. Without the income of wives with paid jobs, the number of families with children receiving less than \$7,000 p.a. would have increased by a further 123,645 or by 97.8 per cent.

* These figures have been calculated by adjusting 1978-79 figures (ABS Income Survey 1978-79) for increases in average weekly earnings and increases in pension rates between December 1978 and December 1982.

Summary

The circumstances under which children are reared in Australia have changed markedly in the last decade or so. The family environment has been altered by a rapid rise in the incidence of divorce, a sharp increase in paid work outside the home for mothers in two-parent families, and a shortening of the stage of child bearing. Divorce has changed the presence of parents in the homes of children. Divorced or separated mothers are more likely to be away from home than are mothers in two-parent families, as they are more likely to be employed or actively seeking work. Additionally, the absence of a father from the home affects children adversely by lowering family income. In two-parent families the major development reducing the presence of parents in the home has been the increase in the labour force participation of mothers.

To the altered presence of parents in children's homes should be added a marked decrease in the number of siblings due to the drop in fertility. This situation regarding the presence of natural parents and siblings in the home is, according to one American commentator, 'unprecedented in this century' (Easterlin, 1982). It gives rise to the question, to be considered next in this submission, how are today's children cared for, and by whom?

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Very few families have access to organised child care services. Of 1.6 million families surveyed in 1980, only 3.9 per cent used day care centres, family day care or commercial centres as their main form of care. (Table 10).

TABLE 10: Main type of care used by family units, Australia, 1980

Main Type of Care	Family Units	
	N(000)	%
<u>1. CARE BY OTHER(S) THAN PERSON RESPONSIBLE</u>		
(a) Informal care		
Spouse of person responsible	320.3	19.9
Older children	65.7	4.1
Other relatives	192.5	11.9
Other persons	165.5	10.3
Sub-total	744.0	46.2
(b) Formal care		
Pre-school	121.7	7.5
Centre*	63.1	3.9
Sub-total	184.8	11.4
(c) By themselves	44.1	2.7
(d) Other	94.6	5.9
Total family units using care	1067.5	66.2
<u>2. CARE BY PERSON RESPONSIBLE ONLY</u>		
	545.0	33.8
Total	1612.5	100

Source: Child care arrangements, Australia, June 1980:
ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 8.

* Note: Centre care includes care at day care centres, family day care and commercial centres.

The children in those families using formal care represented 5.5 per cent of all children under 12 years (ABS, Child care arrangements, 1980, Table 17). Nevertheless, the demand for child care services is remarkably high as only one-third of children are cared for exclusively by their mothers. Almost half a million children were looked after in informal arrangements, by relatives, friends, neighbours and others. In all, 46.2 per cent of families chose to use these private arrangements as their main form of care in 1980.

The type of labour force participation which characterised a family determined both the extent to which care was used at all and the main type of care used. Table 11 shows that families where both parents (or the only parent in one-parent families) were employed sought some form of child care in 85.7 per cent of cases compared with 59.4 per cent of those families where one parent worked and the other did not. Again, families with both parents employed were more likely to choose informal services (67.8 per cent) than families where one parent worked part-time (55.7 per cent) or where only one parent was in the paid labour force (37.8 per cent). Significantly, even in those families where no parent was employed, child care services were still used in 46.4 per cent of cases.

There is a similar relationship between how many forms of care children experience in a week and whether or not their mothers are in employment. While 54% of children in two working parent families attend two or more kinds of child care a week, only 36% do so in households where there is one parent at home and one at work (ABS, Child care arrangements, 1980, Table 23).

TABLE 11: Main type of care used by family units by family labour force status, Australia 1980

Main type of care	Family labour force status											
	All parents* employed F/T		All parents employed, one P/T		One parent employed, one not		All parents not employed		Not determined		Total	
	N(000)	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Informal care	181.4	67.8	193.5	55.7	294.8	37.8	56.2	31.2	18.1	49.7	744	46.1
Formal care	22.5	8.4	36.5	10.5	105.7	13.5	14.9	8.3	5.3	14.6	183.8	11.4
By themselves	14.4	5.4	10.1	2.9	14.7	1.9	4.3	2.4	-	-	44.1	2.7
Other	11.0	4.1	24.9	7.2	48.7	6.2	8.2	4.6	-	-	94.6	5.9
Total family units using care	229.3	85.7	265.1	76.2	463.9	59.4	83.5	46.4	25.7	70.6	1067.5	66.2
Care by person responsible	38.4	14.3	82.6	23.8	316.8	40.6	96.5	53.6	10.7	29.4	545.0	33.8
TOTAL	267.7	100	347.7	100	780.7	100	180.0	100	36.4	100	1612.5	100

Note: * 'All parents' includes the parent in one-parent families. F/T = full-time P/T = part-time

Source: Child Care Arrangements, June 1980
ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 10

The age of children in families where the persons responsible worked also affects the amount and type of care used. Table 12 shows that families with children not at school were much more likely to use formal and informal child care services (88.0 per cent) than those with children at school (53.3 per cent). The families with children under school age used informal care arrangements in 67.8 per cent of cases. In these families relatives other than spouses and older siblings, and people from outside the family were more likely to look after pre-school children than in families with older children.

TABLE 12: Main type of child care arrangement used by employed persons, Australia, 1980

Main Type of Care	Children at School		Children not at School	
	N(000)	%	N(000)	%
<u>Informal Care:</u>				
Spouse of the person responsible	95.1	21.7	40.7	21.9
Older children	42.6	9.7	*	*
Other relatives	45.1	10.3	47.9	25.7
Other person	44.6	10.2	36.2	19.5
<u>Total informal care</u>	<u>227.5</u>	<u>51.9</u>	<u>126.1</u>	<u>67.8</u>
<u>Formal Care:</u>				
Pre-school	*	*	15.9	8.5
Care at centre, etc.	*	-	21.7	11.7
<u>Total formal care</u>	<u>6.2</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>37.7</u>	<u>20.3</u>
<u>Total informal and formal care</u>	<u>233.7</u>	<u>53.3</u>	<u>163.8</u>	<u>88.0</u>
<u>Other:</u>				
By themselves	23.8	5.4	-	-
Other	43.4	9.9	*	*
<u>Total other kinds of care</u>	<u>67.2</u>	<u>15.3</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>
<u>Care by person responsible only</u>				
	137.2	31.3	21.5	11.6
<u>Total family units (1)</u>	<u>438.1</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>186.1</u>	<u>100</u>

Source: Child Care Arrangements Australia, June 1980; ABS Cat No. 4402.0, Tables 14 and 15

(1) Excludes persons who worked at home.

* sample estimates less than 5000 not published separately.

Cost of Care

Tables 13 and 14 show the cost of care for children not at school for Austral' Victoria.

TABLE 13: Cost of care used by persons responsible for children not at school, Australia, June 1980

	Nil	\$1-4	\$5-14	\$15-44	\$45+	Not Stated	Total
Pre-School	31764	82219	37073	11590	883	2483	166012
Centre Care	12056	31723	13175	18705	1547	1864	79070
Relative	174703	1126	3780	6691	538	11467	198305
Other person	71924	4973	17320	26235	2913	7841	131206
Other	4141	2116	331	208	848	1923	9567
TOTAL	N 294588	122157	71679	63429	6729	25578	584160
	% 50.4	20.9	12.3	10.9	1.2	4.4	100

Source: ABS (Unpublished data, child care arrangements, Table 15)

TABLE 13A: Families with children not at school, Australia 1980

	(000)	%
Families using care	584.2	69.4
Families not using care	258.0	30.6
All Families	842.2	100

TABLE 14: Cost of child care used by persons responsible for children not at school, Victoria, June 1980

	Nil	\$1-4	\$5-14	\$15-44	\$45+	Not Stated	Total
Pre-school	1740	42880	1765	2184	-	662	49231
Centre	5694	5835	2177	5216	646	672	20240
Relative	47030	209	1174	1997	-	2382	52792
Other							
Person	18501	2217	5200	6446	233	2123	34720
Other	857	446	-	-	416	227	1946
TOTAL	N 73822	51587	10316	15843	1295	6066	158929
	% 46.4	32.5	6.5	10.0	0.8	3.8	100

Source: ABS (Unpublished data, child care arrangements, Table 16).

TABLE 14A: Families with children not at school, Victoria 1980

	(000)	%
Families using care	158.9	73.2
Families not using care	57.9	26.7
All families	216.8	100

A little over 50 per cent of families in Australia paid nothing for their child care, while 46.4 per cent of Victorian families paid nothing also. In all the cost zones there is a smaller proportion of Victorians than for the national figure (except for the \$1-4 bracket) which comprises 32.5 per cent compared with 20.9 per cent for the nation.

While most families paid little or nothing for their child care, of those who did pay, centre-based care and care by persons other than relatives cost the most. Of those families which paid for care, in only 11.9 per cent of cases did families in Australia pay for care by relatives but they did pay in 84.7 per cent of cases for centre-based care and in 45.2 per cent for care by other persons.

Of those families which did pay for centre-based care, the largest proportion (47.3 per cent) paid less than \$5, whereas the largest proportion of families that paid other people to care for their children, (44.3 per cent), paid between \$15-44. Those families that paid this amount for centre-based care comprised 35.9 per cent of families in Victoria compared to 27.9 per cent of paying families on the national basis.

Table 15 shows that families' use of child care increases as their income increases. The lowest rate of usage of child care was for families with a weekly income of \$120-159 (40.2 per cent), whereas of those families earning more than \$300 per week, 68.4 per cent used child care. There is thus a clear class distinction in both access to and use of child care services.

TABLE 15: Family units with at least one child not at school, using child care by income group and cost of care, Australia, 1980

Income Group	Cost of care per week for all types of care						% of total families in group
	Nil	\$1-4	\$5-14	\$15-44	\$45+	Total	
(\$)	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$ (000)	
Less than 80	73.5		10.4		-	100 15.5	41.2
80-119	59.8	22.6			-	100 19.9	43.2
120-159	53.5	26.5	10.4		-	100 23.0	40.2
160-199	48.2	33.3	10.6	6.4	-	100 42.3	42.7
200-239	53.8	28.7	10.7	6.1	-	100 69.3	47.7
240-299	49.9	25.5	14.5	9.1	-	100 82.2	52.1
300 or more	33.5	18.6	18.1	26.7	3.1	100 164.4	68.4
Not stated						25.5	43.4
Total family units						442.1	52.5

Source: Child care arrangements, Australia, June 1980,
ABS Cat. No.4402.0, tables 2 and 11.

The higher the income of the family the more they paid for the care of their children. Whereas 26.5 per cent of families receiving \$120-159 per week paid \$1-4 per week for care, 26.7 per cent of families in the \$300 plus group paid \$15-44 per week (see Table 15). For each income group, over ninety per cent of families paid child care costs up to about 8 per cent of their weekly income. Table 16 shows 96.9 per cent of families receiving \$300+ per week paid up \$15-44 (mid-point \$30) per week, representing 8 per cent of that income. Of the families receiving \$120-159 per week, 90.4 per cent pay up to \$5-14 (mid-point \$10) which represents 7.1 per cent of that income.

TABLE 16: Family units with at least one child at school:
cost of child care as a percentage of income
Australia, 1980

Weekly cost of child care (mid-point)											
Income Group(\$)	Nil		\$2.50 mid-point			\$10 mid-point			\$30 mid-point		
	% of Income	% of Group	% of Income	% of Group	Cum. %	% of Income	% of Group	Cum. %	% of Income	% of Group	Cum. %
Less than 80(a)-	73.5		3.4	12.3	85.8						
80-119											
(x=100)	-	59.8	2.5	22.6	82.4						
120-159											
(x=140)	-	53.5	1.8	26.5	8.0	7.1	10.4	90.4			
160-199											
(x=180)	-	48.2	1.4	33.3	81.5	5.6	10.6	92.1	16.7	6.4	98.5
200-239											
(x=220)	-	53.8	1.1	28.7	82.5	4.5	10.7	93.2	13.6	6.1	99.3
240-299											
(x=260)	-	49.9	1.0	25.5	75.4	3.8	14.5	89.9	11.5	9.1	99.0
300+(b)	-	33.5	0.7	18.6	52.1	2.7	18.1	70.2	8.0	26.7	96.9

Notes: (a) Average assumed to be \$74.55 = supporting parent benefit,
one child under 6, June 1980.

(b) Average assumed to be \$375.

Formal and Informal Child Care

As shown earlier (Table 11) nearly 70 per cent of families using child care preferred informal arrangements as the main type of care. Of those using formal child care services labour force status appears to determine the type of care chosen (see Table 17).

As was shown in Table 11, families where both parents were employed preferred informal care. Table 17 reinforces this pattern showing the numbers of children not at school in each type of care classified by parents' labour force status.

TABLE 17: Children not at school: main type of care and family workforce status, Australia, June 1980

Parent's Workforce Status	Children in care							
	Children in group N(000)	Informal Care N(000)	%	Formal Care N(000)	%	Total in Care N(000)	%	Care by person responsible only N(000) %
Both parents employed full-time	97.1	64.1	66.0	19.7	20.3	83.8	86.3	12.8 13.2
Both parents employed, at least one part-time	187.2	114.9	61.4	42.1	22.5	157.0	83.9	28.8 15.4
Total both parents employed FT and/or PT	284.3	179.0	63.0	61.8	21.7	240.8	84.7	41.6 14.6
One parent employed, the other NOT	689.4	265.5	38.5	119.2	17.3	384.7	55.8	300.7 43.6
Neither parent employed	124.3	39.0	31.4	16.5	13.3	55.5	44.7	68.0 54.7
Not determined	30.0	12.6	42.0	5.7	19.0	18.3	61.0	11.3 37.7
Total	1128.0	496.0	44.0	203.1	18.0	699.1 ⁽¹⁾	62.0	421.6 37.4

Source: Child Care Arrangements Australia, June 1980; ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 19.

(1) Does not include 7,300 children in other types of care.

The ratio of informal to formal care for children whose parents were employed full-time is 3.25 to 1 and 2.7 to 1 where one parent was employed part-time, compared with 2.2 to 1 for children with one parent not in the workforce.

The 1980 ABS survey divided formal care into two categories: pre-school and centre care - the latter including day care, creche, kindergarten or occasional care centre.

The pattern of use of each type of formal care was different in terms of hours children spent in care and these differences were again related to the employment status of parents -

With regard to hours (Table 18), in pre-schools nearly 60 per cent of children were in care for 10 to 20 hours per week and most of them (85.2%) were in care for 5 to 20 hours. The time children spent in centre care varied more widely; more children were cared for less than 5 hours (18.7%), over one-fifth (20.6%) were cared for 30 or more hours, and 12.5 per cent were cared for 40 or more hours per week. It is evident, then, that centre-based care has greater flexibility than pre-school care with regard to the time a child can be in care (Sweeney and Jamrozik, 1981:26)

TABLE 18: Use of formal care: hours per week, Australia, June 1980

Hours per week	Main type of care			
	Pre-school		Centre, etc.	
	N(000)	%	N(000)	%
Less than 5	8.9	6.3	11.7	18.7
5 to less than 10	35.9	25.6	13.9	22.2
10 to less than 20	83.8	59.6	18.7	29.9
20 to less than 30	3.7	2.6	5.4	8.6
30 to less than 40	5.7	4.1	5.1	8.1
40 or more	*	-	7.8	12.5
Total	140.5	(100)	62.5	(100)

Source: Child Care Arrangements, Australia, June 1980;
ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 16.

Of those who use formal care arrangements, families in which both parents work full-time are the only family type to use centre-based care more than pre-schools. Table 19 shows that children in these families use centre-based care at a rate of 1.6 times that of their use of pre-schools.

TABLE 19: Main type of care used for children not at school by family labour force status, Australia, 1980

	All* parents employed full-time		All parents employed one part-time		One parent employed the other not		No parent employed		Not deter- mined	Total
	(000)	%	(000)	%	(000)	%	(000)	%	(000)	M(000)
<u>Informal care</u>	64.1	66.0	114.9	61.4	265.5	38.5	39.0	31.4	12.6	496
<u>Formal care</u>										
pre-school	7.5	7.7	27.9	14.9	09.6	13.0	11.2	9.0	4.3	140.5
care at centre	12.2	12.6	14.2	7.6	29.5	4.3	5.3	4.3	-	62.5
Total	19.7	20.3	42.1	22.5	119.2	17.3	16.5	13.3	5.7	203.1
Total children in care	84.3	86.8	158.4	84.6	388.7	56.4	56.3	45.3	18.7	706.4
Care by person responsible only	12.8	13.2	28.8	15.4	300.7	43.6	68.0	54.7	11.3	421.6
Total	97.1	100	187.2	100	689.4	100	124.3	100	30.0	1128.0

Source: Child Care Arrangements Australia, June 1980
ABS Cat. No. 4402.0, Table 19.

Note: * 'All parents' includes the parent in one-parent families.

In contrast, children in families where one parent works and the other does not, use pre-school at a rate 3 times that of their use of centre-based care. It appears that families with both parents employed found that pre-schools did not suit their needs. Table 20 shows that of those children attending pre-school only 5.3 per cent were from families where both parents were full-time workers, whereas the children of these families represented 8.6 per cent of all children in the sample not at school.

TABLE 20: Main type of care used for children NOT at school by family labour force status, Australia, 1980

		Informal Care	Pre-School	Centre Care
		%	%	%
All parents employed				
full-time*		12.9	5.3	19.5
All parents employed, at				
least one part-time		23.2	19.9	22.7
One parent employed,				
the other not		53.5	63.8	47.2
All parents not employed		7.9	7.8	8.5
Not determined		2.5	3.1	
Total	%	100	100	100
	N(100)	496	140.5	62.5

* Note: 'All parents' include the parent in one-parent families.

It seems that parents who were employed preferred informal care arrangements the most, then centre-based care and pre-school last of all. Flexibility, availability and cost are all factors which influence the type of care these families chose.

Summary

For a majority of families, regardless of their circumstances, the use of some form of child care is a normal part of the weekly routine. Sixty per cent of families with one parent not in the labour force use child care arrangements regularly. Families therefore demonstrate a high level of demand for assistance with young children by their extensive usage of such services. Parents need assistance when they are at work, when there are illnesses or other disruptions to normal routine, when they need time to do things without children, when they are studying or helping others. They seek companionship for their children and stimulation, learning, development of social skills, intellectual and creative abilities. All these, and many others, are the reasons parents seek various forms of children's services.

Informal arrangements are by far the most used form of service. These include care by other members of the family, both immediate and extended, by neighbours, by private individuals who receive income by looking after other people's children. In many cases these informal services adequately meet the requirements of the family, especially if they are for short periods and children are cared for by people they know and trust. In many other instances, however, such arrangements are entered into because no other choice is equally available. It can be inferred from the data, that families where more than one parent (or the only parent in one-parent families) is in the paid labour force, have to make complicated arrangements for their young children. Over half of the children from these families are looked after under two or more arrangements each week. The pattern of costs for informal arrangements also shows that families are paying more for the flexibility or simply the availability of such services.

While families using formal care arrangements mostly pay small amounts for pre-school fees and short stays at centres, those paying for informal services pay much higher amounts, presumably for care of a longer duration.

Usage of formal services also shows a different pattern for different family types. Pre-school facilities are more suited to families where one parent does not work in the paid labour force. Children from two-working-parent families are under-represented in the pre-school population, indicating an inability of these families to use these services fully. Families where both parents (or the only parent) work, use centre-based care more than other families, and their use of such services is characterised by more hours being used each week.

Centre-based care appears to be able to offer services from 5 to over 40 hours per week compared with a predominant usage pattern of only up to 20 hours for pre-schools.

Families, where at least one parent is not employed in the work-force, appear to have a better choice of services than other types. For families with greater requirements for child care while the persons responsible for children not at school are working, the order of choice, as demonstrated by usage of services is informal arrangements followed by centre-based care and then by pre-school.

Having looked at the pressures pushing families to use children's services, we turn now to examine some of the reasons why formally provided children's services are desirable from a broad social and educational point of view. Quite obviously, from what we have outlined above, the family contexts of child care have changed considerably in recent years, and both access to child care services and the costs of such services are inequitably distributed.

RATIONALE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

It should be necessary to have to spell out a rationale for public provision of children's services, but so many assumptions exist about families, child development, whose responsibility it is to care for children, and so on, that an inquiry such as this is obliged to spell out the benefits as well as the costs.

This submission is based on the view that private care for children is not enough. Many families now, as in the past, do not have the basic resources (of time, energy, know-how, money and physical provisions) to guarantee their children's growth to full or even optimal potential. So public provision for early childhood is needed if only in the sense of compensating for the lack of parental resources, or in the sense of teaching parents and other carers about the central importance of early childhood. Our emphasis, however, is not on a 'compensatory' model so much as on the desirability of quality care for all children.

We know that roughly half the child's intellectual growth takes place in the first four years of life; another thirty per cent occurs before age eight and the rest after that time (Bloom, 1964). Such figures over-simplify the case but the immense capacity for growth in those early years cannot be denied. Yet we find 'education' provided universally only after age five or six, with little public concern for the grossly unequal home environments that have influenced children up to that point.

Australian children grow up in an Australian environment not simply according to psychological theories of development. Moreover, some Australian children grow up on farms, others in country towns, inner cities, the majority in suburbia (Australia having one of the highest rates of individual home ownership in the world). Again, within each of these areas there are tremendous differences between groups. The children of Roman Catholics are raised according to different belief systems from, say, children of Methodists or Jews or Seventh Day Adventists.

Nor do the children of Greek parents learn the same rules, attitudes, behaviour, as the children of Italian, or Turkish, or German migrant parents. The Australian or the Hungarian professional will not give his child the same world to live in as the Australian or Hungarian factory worker. And finally children with only one parent, with several or no brothers and sisters, few or many relatives, will all grow up seeing life around them in different ways.

We would not wish that variety to be reduced; rather we wish to see children's services which enhance the choices available to parents and children and to expand the ability of children to control their environments.

At the centre of any rationale for early childhood development must be the goal of producing competent people in control of their own lives. Control is the focus of all parent-child relationships and should be seen in the light of developing competence in children. It would seem obvious, though it is often forgotten, that the aim of bringing up children is to make them able to control themselves. Sooner or later Mum and Dad will be gone and the children now grown up will have to survive on their own abilities. They have to become competent individuals above all, able to think and act competently for themselves, decide what they want of life and choose the best ways of getting it. If they are too dependent upon parents or other people, they lack control of their own life, are pushed around, unable to choose whether to cooperate or stand alone, and likely to blame 'fate' or other people for their own misfortunes.

The child from the beginning tries to gain control, to master the environment, to produce effects on the big world outside. She's hungry so she cries. He has wind so he screams. He enjoys 'This little piggy goes to market', so he laughs and thrusts his foot at you. Each produce effects, each is successful in having his or her demands for food, relief, pleasure met. Just how successful each is in causing the world to revolve around him or

her will affect the sort of person s/he becomes. Picture the child who does not get food when she cries but only when someone can be bothered, who is not kept clean and warm; who is locked in a room and ignored; who can't get his/her own way in anything. How does s/he view themselves as a person in the world compared with the child whose whole circle of interaction is benign, encouraging, positive rather than vicious, hostile, negative?

A central aspect of that sense of mastery, of control over the environment, is language. We are aware of the vast literature on language, reading skills and social class differences in both literacy and linguistic codes, but two central points remain: inadequate language skills handicap any child in our society for life; and the foundation for language skills is laid in the home in early childhood.

Children have an active questioning relationship with the world from the beginning. They try to interpret the world and make sense of it in order to anticipate events. Margaret Donaldson in Children's Minds (1978) argues that young babies have a strong urge to learn which is not just motivated by 'rewards'. She quotes research by Hanus Papousek (1969) in which babies as young as four months learn to switch on a display of lights by making a series of head turns. In his observations Papousek said it was not the lights as such that made the babies 'smile and bubble', but the sense of satisfaction gained (they didn't take much notice of the lights once they came on). The babies were building 'an inner' representation of their own world and were able to predict on it which led to satisfaction when they were successful and dissatisfaction and displeasure when they failed.

This could be linked to the fact that some children, (eg. children in high rise flats), often don't have the opportunity to build up a variety of experiences and hence mental representations which help them to hypothesise and predict in many situations - especially school. Their opportunities and environment restrict the development of their learning/thinking.

Language is learned in the family and it is language which separates human beings from other animals, giving us the ability to recall the past and speculate about the future. It is this symbolic capacity which enables us to predict, plan and hence more fully to master the environment. Young children learn the language of the particular cultural group to which their family belongs, but oral communication is only the start of mastery of the written code which often differs from the form of language used at home. Since it is reading which underpins success or failure in education, we need to look closely at which families lay a sound basis for later reading skills and which do not. But in doing so we must stress the broader social structures which limit access to essential resources for reading and which culturally de-value some group and family styles in favour of others.

Research has shown that the children who most frequently fail to achieve competency with the written code are those from families who are poor. Since in Australia approximately 670,000 dependent children are living below or within 20 per cent of the poverty line, we need to ask what can be done to avoid their inbuilt disadvantage. While Bernstein (1975) and others have theorised that 'working class' children fail because they learn at home a more 'restricted' form of speech than the 'elaborated' code learned by middle class children. Others such as Labov (1976), argue that the problem lies in people's attitudes to the different forms of speech rather than the language differences themselves. In other words, middle class teachers may subtly or unsubtly, reject or de-value the different speech of working class children.

We believe that much of this debate ignores the lack of resources many families have for developing language skills needed for later reading and formal education. It also tends to push the debate into a critique of 'inadequate' parents or 'faulty' families rather than to look at positive structural solutions to the problems. Moreover, it suggests that 'working class'

children are the only ones who are 'deprived' of basic language skills and forgets that many 'middle class' families have no idea either of the importance of pre-reading experiences, of play or of exploration for every child.

When researchers have looked at what factors contribute to success rather than failure we get a more balanced picture. Margaret Clark, for example, investigated children who could read fluently when they started school. She found most, but not all, were of above average intelligence, their family size and level of parents' education varied widely, but all of their parents valued education. Those parents with little education wanted their children to have what they had missed out on; the well educated wanted their children to experience what they had themselves. The most important factor was that all these children in their pre-school years had an adult who was interested and available to talk and listen to them. Very few parents had tried to teach their children to read, but the mothers themselves read widely, used local libraries and there was always an adult who was willing to read to the child or answer questions. Some children had shown interest in the printed information on household products, advertisements on television etc., and had then graduated to books. (Clark, 1976: 98-104).

Moon and Wells (C.1979) in Bristol also looked at young children starting school to see what home factors influenced learning to read. It boiled down to parental provision of the materials of literacy (books, papers, pencils) and the quality of verbal interaction with the child. As they point out, 'those who enter school knowing most about literacy are the ones who have the greatest reading attainment at the age of seven'. This does not mean schools make no difference, nor does it mean that what needs to be done is for all parents to provide materials and to read, talk and listen to their children. We have to ask why some parents do not rather than merely saying they should.

The answer directs our attention back to the structured inequalities of our society. Providing books and writing materials costs money and many families do not have money to spare from the competing priorities of providing food, paying the rent and heating their homes. Moreover, time availability and the energy levels needed may not be there when work for subsistence takes precedence over parent-child interaction. Even where such parents value education the time for reading may not be there. Reading requires effort, their own reading ability may not be high and their own experience of schooling may well have been negative in itself.

Add to this the fact that municipal libraries are often not available in lower income areas and that such places may be intimidating to the poor and uneducated, and it is small wonder that they and their children prefer to watch television. We might add that neither governments, nor broadcasters, nor education authorities recognise the importance of, or provide adequate funds for, quality children's television programs, so another key structural influence ignores responsibilities to early childhood development.

Clearly then, every child's sense of who s/he is and where s/he fits into the world depends largely upon:

- . the extent to which they are offered support (physical, social, intellectual and emotional) for their developing needs and abilities;
- . the degree to which others exercise dominance or control over them or to which they can manipulate others and interact with them;
- . the actual resources at their own and their family's disposal (money, food, time, language, social status) and the abilities, skills and competences s/he is able to develop;

the sense of power, independence and semi-autonomy: of being in relative control of their own life that develops out of these combined influences.

Some aspects of child development will be common to all children, of whatever ethnic origin or economic status. Despite marked differences between cultures and socio-economic groups in child-rearing practices, human growth does follow certain patterns.

We cannot here rehearse all of the arguments and research evidence about the contexts of early childhood development. But we can highlight some of the findings most directly relevant to complementing private contexts with more formal and publicly provided contexts for children to grow in.

Parents and additional caregivers

A key proposition about the child's optimum development is that continuity and consistency are essential elements of trust; the child needs a sense of meaning and predictability in its social environment in which to develop a sense of control and to affirm its growing identity.

Yet notice what is implied here. Continuity may not be possible because both settings and people change. With high occupational mobility, familiar home surroundings, the security of the back yard and one's own room cannot be guaranteed. With marriage breakdown, desertion, separation and divorce, there is little chance for a child to trust, to make meaning out of the situation or to feel he/she is in control of the home and its social environment.

For example, we know that pre-school children are adversely affected by divorce. Wallerstein and Kelly's work (1974) showed that both boys and girls in the 2 1/2 - 3 1/2 year age group responded to divorce with observable behavioral change - crying,

whining, regression, irritability, anxiety, sleep problems. This was in spite of the fact that all but one stayed with their mother in a familiar environment. Their play was restricted and joyless and the toy world was seen as unsafe. After a year they showed a strong need for closeness, even with strangers. What counted most for these children was the degree of conflict between parents and the quality of caretaking able to be given by mothers distracted with their own adult problems.

The middle pre-school group were less inclined to regress but 'their concept of the dependability of human relationships and of objectives was profoundly shaken, and they were frightened, confused and sad'. Moreover, they tended to blame themselves for their father's departure, which indicates that children see themselves as active not passive participants in the family drama.

With the oldest pre-school group (5-6), aggression and anxiety increased though their cognitive ability to interpret the situation was better and their developmental progress appeared unimpaired at later interviews.

Another study by Hetherington and Cox (1979) found boys and girls from divorced homes less happy, more anxious, depressed, guilty and apathetic than other children. They showed less imaginative play with less co-operative and constructive relations in play activities, an interesting reminder of the importance of play in acting out (or suppressing) the realities children have to test in life. Perhaps even more significantly in this study, teacher interaction with children from divorced homes, particularly boys, was more negative or ambivalent, a finding supported by a study (Edgar & Headlam, 1982) of teachers' attitudes to children from one-parent families.

In short, large numbers of children do not grow up in intact homes with nuclear family role models, so the context of child development are in themselves changing. Parenting in such

altered circumstances is difficult and requires support; child care providers, kindergarten and pre-school teachers, neighborhood self-help centres must all face the challenge and adapt their methods to family and childhood needs.

What must also be asked, of course, is whether day care and pre-school centres in fact provide a satisfactory alternative (or supplementary) context for such children. Most of the controversy about this question revolves around notions of the mother's centrality to the child's sense of security and trust.

Mothers' role in development of child's
sense of security and trust

Opponents of formal child care claim that 'maternal deprivation', a loss of 'attachment' or 'bonding' to the mother figure result from placing the child with 'strangers' or 'external' care-givers. Usually, the work of Bowlby (1969) is cited to support this view, but the powerful theories of Freud and Anna Freud also unlie it.

Ironically, Bowlby's definition of attachment as 'the affectional tie that a child forms with an individual' implies that children can be attached to more than one individual, and he used day care children as the control group whose development he considered normal. As Brennan (1983) puts it, Bowlby's (1953) work:

... has little direct relevance to children living in their own homes and attending day care centres. He was concerned with children living in hospitals and residential institutions who had been separated from their entire families, usually under traumatic circumstances such as war. Bowlby's work has had a beneficial effect on the practices of staff in residential care nurseries and hospitals - overnight stays and extended visiting by parents in children's hospitals are a direct outcome of his

work. However, the attempt to apply maternal deprivation theory to ordinary families in ordinary circumstances has had bizarre consequences. For example it has been estimated that between 20 per cent and 50 per cent of children surrendered to State institutions in New South Wales could have remained with their families if adequate child care facilities had been available. Likewise, the lack of child care facilities has meant that many migrants have been forced to send their children back to the home country until they reach school age.

The appalling irony here is that opposition to the establishment of child care services on the grounds that children should not be separated from their mothers for a few hours a day has directly contributed to many children being separated from their entire families for years at a stretch, and in some cases forever.

The idea that babies and small children need constant care by their mothers is extremely ethnocentric and ignores the great range of child rearing practices throughout history and across different cultures. Many countries similar to our own (such as France, Israel and Denmark) have extensive traditions of out of home care for children. It would be difficult to argue that such countries have bred a majority of citizens who are deprived, affectionless adults incapable of forming close relationships. The assumption that children's psychological development is essentially determined within the family (particularly by the relationship with parents) is by no means universally shared. The relationships which a young child forms with other children and with adults outside the family are accorded great significance in other cultures. Likewise the family's access to adequate income, housing, health and social services is seen as far more important to a

child's upbringing than the twenty-four hour presence of a devoted mother.

Eva Cox has suggested that children reared solely in nuclear families where they are largely dependent upon one adult to meet all their needs are likely to suffer social deprivation rather than maternal deprivation:

Very young children are capable of multiple bonding - in simple terms, of making friends with a range of people. They particularly love the company of older children. And yet they are often isolated with mother at home for many hours of the day, most days of the week, in the interests of 'good childcare'.
(Cox, 1978).

It is often physically impossible for a mother at home to meet the needs of demanding small children while attending to the domestic chores. Lack of space is a common problem. Many families live in small houses or flats which do not have gardens or accessible public parks. Other difficulties may be less obvious. Not all families can afford the toys, books and games which others take for granted as a normal part of childhood - much less the sandpits, paddling pools and swings which well-off children may enjoy at home. Attendance at a child care centre does not 'deprive' children; for many it provides not only educational benefits but also opportunities for companionship, imaginative play and loud and messy games which could not possibly be enjoyed in their homes. (Brennan, 1983 pp.17-19).

More formal research evidence can be adduced to support this view. Caldwell, Wright, Honig and Tannenbaum (1970) conducted the first investigation to assess the impact of day care on the mother-child attachment bond. In a study of toddlers from low income families enrolled in a high quality university day care program they found no significant differences between their day care and home-reared groups. While Blehar (1974) found that day care children showed a more anxious attachment relationship to the mother, other studies using the same 'strange situation' technique have failed to replicate Blehar's findings (Portnoy & Simmons, 1978; Doyle, 1975; Brookhart & Hock, 1976). Further, Moskowitz, Schwartz and Corsini (1977) found that home-reared children were the ones who displayed more distress upon separation from the mother.

Mother versus caregiver

A related fear has been that children may become more attached to their caregivers than to their mothers. There is no support at all for this view. Farren and Ramey (1977) in an observation study with mothers and substitute caregivers found all children overwhelmingly preferred to be near, to interact with and to seek aid from their mothers rather than the substitute caregivers. Kagan (1976) and Ricciuti (1974) found the same.

Moreover, Ricciuti discovered that when infants were left with a strange adult or a familiar substitute caregiver, they preferred the latter to the stranger. Cummings (1980) demonstrated, too, that while children prefer stable (i.e. long-term, familiar) caregivers to unstable, changing figures, this matters less in a laboratory setting than it does in an ordinary familiar day care setting. In other words, children can and do develop differentiated attachments with alternative caregivers and such relationships remain subordinate to the one with the mother.

As Watkins and Bradbard (1982) point out, such findings have important implications for formal day care providers. They

stress that such research is done usually in high quality day care centres with highly trained personnel which are well equipped to enhance child development. We know little of what happens in private, for-profit day care centres where the caregivers are less well trained and which lack properly designed facilities. What is crucial to quality day care then, is 'its provision of dependable, responsive and stable caregivers who are willing to give generously of their time and affection'.

Indeed the Oxford Pre-school Research Group, headed by Jerome Bruner, found that child minding (ie. informal home-based care in a 'carer's' private home):

in its present form creates problems for at least a third of children in such care, and for possibly as many as a half. The 'quality' of the minder, her degree of concern for children, and the setting in which she works, help surprisingly little, though we know that when the setting is less fortunate and the quality of care less good ... the degree of difficulty increases ... The heart of the problem ... appears to be the discontinuity between home and the minder's for the child, and the lack of adequate communication between minder and mother. It can be said statistically that the greater the tension and trouble in the home of the child, the more likely is such depressed behaviour to appear at the minder's, whatever her qualifications or setting ... the findings of research suggest that great caution should be exercised in expanding this form of service. (Bruner, 1980: 180-181).

Stability of care and quality also depend upon group size more than upon the caregiver-child ratio. Smaller group size facilitates involvement with the children and frees caregivers from management overload. The U.S. National Day Care Study (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz & Coelen, 1979) showed that children in

smaller groups made greater gains on measures of intelligence, creativity, play and cooperation with others. They recommended maximum group sizes of 6 or less for children under 2 years, 12 or less for children 2-3 years and groups of 18 or less for children 3-6 years. Staff-child ratios should not exceed 1:3 for children 0-2 years, 1:4 for children 2-3 years, and 1:9 for children 3-6 years. They also suggest a more home-like atmosphere in day care centres as extensions of the home, to facilitate the transition from home to day care. Their dreadful term 'homeanised day care' notwithstanding, it is clearly desirable that children in day care centres should be able to keep favourite home items (eg. toys, blankets, photos etc.) at the centre and that parent participation should be encouraged.

In sum, it is our view that children could all benefit from wider attachments with alternate caregivers instead of exclusive contact with the mother in an often isolated and unstimulating home setting.

Fathers' role in early childhood development

Related to this is our view that fathers and male figures in general should play a more active role in early child development.

The work of Lamb (1975) in the U.S., of Graeme Russell (1980) and Don Edgar in Australia all suggest that the father has been a forgotten figure in child development. Given that males have held the dominant power and authority positions within society for so long, it is extraordinary to have supposed their very presence and behaviour in the home were unimportant to children, or that their lack of presence in the home or day care centre may not matter.

Men are now learning the art of parent-child intimacy, the 'parenting trade' and are beginning to follow the dictum of Letty Pogrebin's book, Growing up free (1980). 'Don't be the man you

think you should be, be the father you wish you'd had'. She points to the way definitions vary: maternal deprivation becomes father absence; the male-dominated household is called traditional whereas the female-dominated is called matriarchal. She points to the bonding myth and its Madonna and Child view which pushes father out of the picture; to the need for fathers to attach to the child early on if healthy relationships are to grow and if that sense of loss reported by adolescents about their 'unknown' fathers is to be avoided. Men and women who stop their sons from playing dolls or houses are in fact preventing them from acting out the father-parent role, from putting the developing self in the place of the male in the household with whom the son is supposed to identify. As Pogrebin (1982) puts it, 'our culture creates an aversion to the very activities that make a man a good father', by teaching males to screen their behaviour, to avoid participation in parenting, to deny their own input into the child's development.

Biller (1974) in fact suggests that mothers tend to inhibit the child's exploration while fathers encourage curiosity. Fathers' play was more fun and the infant responded more positively than to mothers' play, the fathers' encouragement of curiosity and attempts to solve cognitive and physical challenges fostering the child's 'sense of mastery over the environment'. The mother's more regular interaction with children inevitably becomes a pragmatic, caregiving role, perhaps taken for granted, and there is other evidence to suggest that in natural, stress-free situations infants do not exhibit a strong preference for either parent. Research in the U.K. has also shown that most English fathers are very accessible to their young when at home and that some infants and fathers have highly positive and enjoyable interaction on both sides, although some fathers do not. It must also be taken into account that insecure attachments to mother resulting from insensitive interaction are very common.

To assume that the mother is most important in a child's life because she spends most time with it is clearly unsatisfactory, because it takes for granted the actual quality of interaction between mother and child. Mother may often be present without interacting with the child. Amount of time spent together is a poor predictor of the quality of an infant's relationship with either mother or father. The quality of interaction and sensitivity to what the infant signals is all-important. Schaffer and Emerson (1964) and other researchers found a few hours pleasurable interaction more conducive to strong attachments than unstimulating cohabitation with a harassed mother or an uncaring father.

The relevant research certainly supports the notion that the infant's social world is far more complex than most have assumed and that, from the earliest age, the baby is likely to be influenced by, and reciprocally to influence, both directly and indirectly, at least both its parents and probably other relatives and friends as well. The fact that infants form attachments to more than one person has clear survival value, as Head (1962) points out, since the child then has insurance against the loss of a parent. (Lamb, 1976, 6).

Child care provides other authority figures which give the child variety in adult contacts within ongoing relationships. These other adults can be a source of security for children whose parents separate or when there are any difficulties at home eg. illness of parents, family fights and disagreements, or the arrival of a new sibling. So child care and pre-school services are an essential part of providing contexts for all children in which they can expand their attachments beyond (one) parent(s) and learn how to relate to other significant adult models.

The role of peers in early childhood

Perhaps more important than the desirability of widening adult-child attachments is the vital necessity of peer contacts for the social development of children.

Because of the decline in family size, children have fewer siblings with whom to interact and many have no siblings. Where siblings are of the same sex, they may miss out on close intimate interaction with children of the opposite sex and grow up knowing little of the opposite sex. Regular close peer relationships from an early age can compensate for this lack.

Peter Renshaw (1981), in an historical review of early childhood research, points out that the 1930s were very productive years in analysis of peer group interaction among children. Moreno's (1932) work on sociometry, Sherif's (1936) studies of group interaction and Lewin's (1931) experiments on authoritarian versus democratic and laissez faire styles of group leadership led to a new interest in the influence of children on one another's social behaviour. In the 1930s too, researchers such as Murphy (1937), Parten (1932), Koch (1933) and Buhler (1930) found very young children did interact altruistically towards one another. Naturalistic urban observation studies (Thrasher 1927; Park, 1915, 1936) demonstrated the validity of Cooley's (1902) insistence on the importance of peers as socialisation agents. Coinciding with these studies was the growth in the U.S. in the late 1920s of child welfare institutes initiating research on children's social, cognitive and physical development; the political fear that democracy was failing with growing youth unemployment and rising fascism; and the demands of Piaget, Dewey and others for progressive educational reforms.

Research then showed that, contrary to Anna Freud's (1935) view of young children as inconsiderate, self-centered, cruel and anti-social (because of the struggle between ego and environmental restrictions), children were instead overwhelmingly

cooperative in play and showed mutual sympathetic behaviour especially when older children interacted with younger playmates (Parten, 1932; Murphy, 1937). Murphy's (1937) study of pre-schoolers showed how important is the context of the child's surrounding environment: children's play reflected both the nurturant patterns of parenting and the aggressive patterns of shooting and killing, 'imitating the destructive as well as the cooperative tendencies of their surrounding culture' (Renshaw, 1981:5).

The significance of this early research on peer interaction is twofold. First, it was displaced in the post-War theoretical shifts. Renewed interest in the Freudian emphasis on parent-child relationships tended to exclude study of child-child relationships until the 1970s. New theories of social perception (Bruner & Postman, 1948; Radke, Trager and Davis, 1949; Ausubel, Schiff and Gasser, 1952 etc.) pushed research towards the perceptual and cognitive processes that mediate children's responses to each other. And the new experimentalism of behavioural learning theory (Keller, 1950; Skinner, 1947) pushed even non-behaviourists (e.g. Sears, 1947) away from observing children in naturalistic settings towards testing principles and laws of behaviour.

Secondly, the 1930s research was conducted at a time when very few children were in formalised day care and when families were much larger. The 1936 White House Conference (Anderson, 1936) found that children not in nursery schools were not deprived of peer group interaction opportunities. By age two, only 6 per cent of children had not had a chance to play with other children and 40 per cent of two year olds already had a favourite playmate. Apart from siblings, children were allowed to play away from home, with neighbourhood and family-related friends. The point is, of course, that nowadays family size is much smaller so neighbourhood peer numbers are much reduced. As a result peer contacts need to be provided in planned group settings for more and more children. In passing it should be

noted that there is an important gap in early childhood research. We need to know which children have contact with peers, in what circumstances, and with what effects.

To learn sociability and develop interpersonal competence, children need regular opportunities to play together. They learn social skills from each other rather than from adults. With peers, there is the opportunity to explore meanings and change understandings in an equal exchange, whereas with adults, that exchange is by definition unequal (Youniss, 1980). It was shown as early as 1934 that children's personality traits could be modified in peer group settings. Jack (1934) taught submissive children to be more assertive (in her terms, socially gregarious, assertive and at times a leader) by giving them knowledge of how to play a new game. They became more confident because their resources and skills had been enhanced and their competence relative to other children enabled them to be more assertive. As Renshaw (1981) indicates, other researchers felt it was more important to teach children to be cooperative so taught them integrative strategies that took note of the rights and needs of others (Anderson, 1937; Page, 1936; Chittenden, 1942). But the point remained that it was in interaction with peers that successful changes in social development could be achieved.

More recent research has returned to the importance of children's social interaction with one another. As Damon (1977) puts it:

...learning the characteristics of persons and institutions contributes only marginally to the process of understanding the social world. More central and more difficult is understanding the nature of the relations between persons (or between persons and institutions) and the transactions that serve to regulate, maintain, and transform these relations. A child experiences and makes sense out of society only by gaining knowledge of such social relations as authority, attachment,

and friendship, and of such social transactions as punishment, sharing, kindness and hostility. These power and archetypal social relations organise a child's social world and yet do not depend upon person or institution specific attributes for their fundamental character.

The young child who stays within the boundaries of his/her own home is provided with fewer opportunities to develop these understandings than those who experience some regular form of child care.

Bruner cites a study by McNeill and McNeill which shows that in most societies, the principal source of language learning was other children. And, despite a study by Barbara Tizard (1979) 'that the quality of mother-child talk at home, built on shared topics and presuppositions, is richer and more finely tuned than language in nursery school ... it is also important to learn to talk with strangers - age mates and teachers. Is there enough opportunity for that?' (Bruner, 1980:186).

Most significant is a finding that 'early peer exposure in a day care setting might actually facilitate the acquisition of more mature forms of social behaviour' (Watkins and Bradbard, 1982:179). Both older and younger day care children are more peer orientated than home-reared children (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978); they show a higher level of developmental play, more positive emotions and greater independence than the home-reared (Rubenstein & Howes, 1979); they have been shown to adjust better to new day care environments the longer they have been in day care (Schwartz, Krolick & Strickland, 1973). And there is a direct relationship between increased social competence and a shift in orientation from teacher to peers. The earlier findings of Murphy (1937) are reflected in the findings of Schwartz (1974) and Vlietstra (1979) which show that full-day care children are both more pro social and more assertive or aggressive with their peers than those attending only half-day sessions; and in the

findings of Anderson & Messick (1974) who show that social competence in children is highest when both pro social and aggressive behaviours are present. In other words, children learn both cooperation and conflict management skills when they are able to interact more frequently with peers. They become more competent, more able to control their social environment and better prepared to act independently in and on their world.

One further implication of importance emerges from the research on children's peers. This is that mixed age groups are preferable to same age groups in day care settings. Observation studies have shown that in local neighbourhoods children spend 65 per cent of their time interacting with children who differ in age by at least one year. (Barker & Wright, 1955). Preschools with mixed-age groupings display 'less verbal and physical aggression, more affection and less competition, and more social contacts and imaginative behaviours' (Watkins & Bradbard, 1982, referring to Fein & Clark-Stewart, 1973). The older children act as role models, use the younger children to test themselves out on more responsible tasks and both age groups benefit mutually from the exchange. This has always been true of large families but not many children today have the benefit of such a range of siblings. Day care centres and preschools are therefore central to ensuring the adequate social development of our children.

Smaller families and the need for mixed peer group interaction also mean that formal pre-school services may be the only source of opportunities for mixed sex interaction. We would agree with Watkins and Bradbard (on whose work much of this section has been based) that while 'androgyny' (i.e. a mixture of so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits) may be desirable, and while

the environment needs to be designed to encourage children to share a common range of sex-role information, interests and aspirations, children must be allowed to maintain their identities as girls and boys. In short, facilitating the growth

of a differentiated self-identity should always be of primary importance. (Watkins and Bradbard, 1982:1983).

Day care boys and girls are equally independent of the mother compared to home-reared children (Wynn, 1979); girls do play 'boy's' games when the pre-school setting encourages or allows it (Lee & Gropper, 1974) and male caregivers can be just as nurturant as female caregivers, acting as role models for both masculine behaviour and less sex-stereotyped models of what men and women may be interested in doing (Robinson & Hobson, 1978; Baumrind, 1972). So the structure of pre-school and day care settings should be designed in awareness of the need for wider and less rigid sex-role behaviour.

We have stressed the social development rationale for early childhood services in this section rather than one based strictly on their 'educational' role, because we feel the false dichotomy that has pervaded this field historically should be exposed. The 'gardens for little children' first expounded by Froebel in Germany led the kindergarten movement down a stormy path. That movement began in Sydney and Melbourne as a charitable or philanthropic enterprise to improve the lot of the poor. It soon clashed with those like Dr John Smyth and Miss Eva Hooper who knew that Froebel's 'veritable paradise' was also meant to include 'the formal "gifts and occupations", the stimulation of powers of observation, imagination and thought' (Edgar and others, 1973). The Free Kindergarten Union movement forged by Dr Smyth in 1908 split in 1917 away from training courses at Melbourne Teachers' College because of its heavy educational emphasis.

Dr Symth and Miss Pye were accused of formalising the garden of play and forgetting the true philanthropic function of kindergartens and creches set up in poor areas to keep children from neglect and foster the development of those whose homes

offered little nourishment either physical, intellectual or spiritual. The 'missionary' standpoint was championed over the educational one which 'neglected training in habits of kindness, courtesy, thoughtfulness and unselfishness', all clearly matters of (middle class) character building (Edgar and others, 1973:127).

There is still more than a hint of this traditional clash in current ideologies, though early childhood education has come a long way since then.

We wish to stress that social development is educational, that every child has a right and a need to grow in confidence, to acquire the competences necessary to master the varied and complex environment of life, and that children who are denied opportunities to contact adults other than the parent(s), to associate with peers of mixed age and sex are placed at an enormous disadvantage, both in broad developmental terms and in more specific cognitive and educational terms.

No nation can afford to neglect its young. These early years are too vital to later growth potential to leave to the structured inequalities of family life. Just as schools are provided, free and compulsory, to all, so too should opportunities for pre-school experiences in a properly designed and supervised environment be available to every child.

The educational aspects of child care can be summarised fairly succinctly.

Child care is inherently educational as the child:

- (i) receives stimulation from interaction with adults other than parents;
- (ii) learns to share and cooperate with other children;

- (iii) learns to follow rules;
- (iv) is located in a varied and intellectually stimulating environment with a choice of a number of activities many of which would not be provided in the average home;
- (v) has access to stories and books which are the basis for literacy, providing the child from a non-book home with the opportunity for a better start in education and therefore in life, and the child from a book-based home with a reinforcement and expansion of the home experience;
- (vi) is given, through a variety of experiences and opportunities, a chance to learn to predict and control the environment around him/her.

POLICIES FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

In making suggestions regarding policies for children's services, the Institute notes that many needs of families may only be fully met by policies that relate to employment, income security and the provision of adequate health services, housing and education. Many of the problems are related to work, and policies that allow families to mix work and family life with less difficulty, such as family leave for illness for example, are needed as well as the provision of adequate child care.

There are so many factors contributing to the debate about the provision of an adequate system of children's services that it is difficult to decide upon a starting point when discussing how best to bring about such a system. Kamerman and Kahn in a review of research findings noted the following as relevant 'given' factors (Kamerman and Kahn, 1981):

- . married women are an integral part of the workforce and will continue to participate in large numbers;
- . there is no evidence that children develop inadequately as a consequence of their mother's working or of their experience of child care;
- . there is some evidence that children develop better when their mothers work;
- . there is some evidence that women who are at home alone, with very young children, may become depressed;
- . women's wages and occupational progress are impeded by encouraging women to leave the labour force for an extended period of time;
- . with changing fertility, divorce and work patterns, in-home child care will be less and less available over time;

it is better for the overall development of children if there is available to them, after a certain age, a group experience with other children, regardless of whether their mothers work.

It has been important in the past and will continue to be so in the future, for women with dependent children to work; important for the economy, for the women's families and for the women themselves. Increased provision of a range of children's services other than pre-schools has been in the past the result of the need for female labour. At present, the demand for such services, provided formally or more usually by informal arrangements, results from the need for families to increase their incomes. However, we contend that such ends should not be the sole determinants of policies regarding children's services. At base there should be more fundamental goals; to extend the opportunities for families to maximise the well-being of their members and to ensure that children are provided with the best of conditions for their physical, intellectual and social development.

The future development of children's services will take place against a background of change in both families and in society. Families are smaller, providing less opportunity for sibling relationships and peer group experiences. Families are breaking up and reforming at a much greater rate than previously thereby generating stress, more frequent periods of readjustment for children and adults, and periods of more limited adult/child interaction. Mothers are increasingly involved outside the home in paid jobs or in unpaid voluntary work. Economic uncertainty and unemployment place greater strains on family resources, both material and emotional. The future shape of work and social existence will require that young people develop greater flexibility of skills and tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, for which foundations must be laid at an early age.

The Institute submits the following suggestions relating first to the nature, level of provision and organisation of children's services, and secondly to the relative responsibilities that various levels of government should undertake to ensure the development of a comprehensive system.

The provision of children's services

1. The development of a comprehensive system of early childhood services

Governments should work toward a future situation where those families who desire to use children's services have adequate access to them. Consequently the many services that are fragmented in their delivery and varying in their suitability to families' needs must be brought together in a comprehensive and integrated system. Services up to now have evolved to meet certain needs and/or objectives which have been predicated on set assumptions about the behaviour and structure of families. Thus families where both parents work or in the case of single parent families, where the sole parent has a job, find that access to pre-schools is far more difficult than for families where a parent is at home. Complicated multiple arrangements have to be made for children of working families to attend pre-school. In recent years assumptions about 'need' meant that families were not eligible for services unless they met various criteria regarding income, ethnic origin or family type. Consequently most families have found that the only way to avail themselves of a service was to seek out some informal arrangement. According to Brennan (1983 p.32):

If child care provision were seen as a basic service available to all, parents could choose the hours of care which they required and the types of services which best suit their needs. At present, such a simple idea seems quite revolutionary!

2. A comprehensive system should be available to all families

The Institute appreciates that certain families have special needs and require more resources than many other families, and it believes that these needs should be met according to certain principles. First, families should not be stigmatised by being categorised as 'needy'. Secondly, when children from such families use early childhood services they should experience a mix of social and ethnic backgrounds, at least one that reflects their community.

The basic level of service provision therefore should be available to all families who wish to use them. Where some children require extra or specialist resources to be devoted to them, these should be available in addition to the basic provision. Families should also be able to avail themselves of any such special resources when they decide themselves that they need them.

The Institute recognises that with the present low level of provision the goal of a universally available service system will have to be a long-term one. In the interim, significant effort should be expended on communities with fewer resources than others and maximum use should be made of existing under-utilised facilities.

3. The current dichotomy between 'education' and 'care' should be abandoned in favour of an integrated system

In order to offer a more comprehensive service which meets the diverse needs of children and families, the false dichotomy that has developed between pre-school and child care services has to be disposed of. The limitations evident in the pre-school sector include its relative inaccessibility to families with two adults in the workforce, its under-utilisation of capital resources and its concentration on a narrow age range of children. On the surface it appears that these shortcomings could be overcome by

by the simple inclusion of pre-school elements into any multi-functional child care setting. The integration of such activities and emphases that characterise pre-schooling should be regarded as a normal requirement of any comprehensive service, yet it appears that historical and professional impediments are still a significant barrier. It should be a prime objective of government to dismantle this barrier.

4. Extension of services should involve the greater utilisation of existing facilities, resources and programs

Currently there are numerous programs and resources within the community that provide children's services but not all are fully utilised. Many pre-schools are not used for some parts of the day, especially after 3 p.m., and are not open in school holidays.

Other facilities such as baby health centres and various school buildings are centrally located and not fully used. Programs should be mounted so that such existing facilities can be modified and 'children's centres' created which provide a wide range of services. Primary and/or secondary schools could be integrated into such children's centres in the longer term.

The Institute believes integration and co-ordination of State-provided services will occur only at the local level, when community groups are given the responsibility to define needs and to identify resources that can be built on, as well as the power to control funds directly for defined purposes.

We believe it is time for governments to highlight the importance of children to our social future by integrating services that support families in a more far-reaching way. We also believe that only such an integrated approach will remove the false distinction between private family versus public support, between child care versus pre-school education, and between health services versus family health practices.

We agree with Don Matters of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia, who first proposed children's centres (1982), that in providing early childhood education and care services governments must establish both universal services for all families and children, and selective services for specified individuals and groups in clear circumstances of special need.

Child care organisations should be integrated and the full range of services should be available, including family day care, pre-school groups, emergency care, before and after school care, holiday care, play groups, respite care and full-day care. All child care centres should therefore be open for a minimum of 51 weeks per year and 60 hours per week (7.00 a.m. - 7.00 p.m. each week day).

The 1978 Report in Britain by the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) recommended similarly that child care services should be combined via two low-cost expedients. The first was to extend hours at existing nursery schools; the second was to use spare school classrooms for pre-school groups as they became available with declining school-age populations. As Bruner notes, the French experience in extending nursery school hours to assist working parents has been effective and full-day care is standard practice in many western and all eastern European countries. He also recommends against any expansion of 'child minders' as cheap substitutes for proper child care, but feels they could be used as aides to supplement services and extend hours in integrated children's centres (Bruner, 1980:175).

Mobile services need to be provided for remote rural and metropolitan communities and to bring from regional resource centres the benefits of book, video and toy libraries to each neighbourhood Family Centre. Each centre should include a drop-in parent lounge and each should be managed by parents as an incorporated body. Seminars, classes and workshops for parents could be organised drawing upon other agencies such as CAE, WEA,

TAFE colleges, etc.

Each centre should be autonomous within certain licensing laws and regulations and local schools, churches, municipal offices, employers etc. should be encouraged to accept licensed centres within their organisations.

The State should provide one employing authority to co-ordinate and service the network of children's centres, and develop appropriate career paths and staff development programs, etc. for child care workers, pre-school teachers and so on. Centres should have the power to select and appoint staff both on a permanent and a contract basis.

Other existing service types should be upgraded so that they might better meet the needs of their users. One area of glaring need is the family day care system. Such care is often characterised by low rates of pay, the lack of adequate support for carers, the non-existence of opportunities for their training, the absence of conditions such as paid recreation or sick leave and a precarious legal situation in case of accident. Brennan (1983) proposes that government subsidies be provided to bridge the gap between parents' fees and carers' wages. She also suggests that training courses and the possibility of employment in centres should be offered to carers. A significant outcome might be that the burgeoning 'backyard' child care industry might be reduced as the payment of reasonable wages and the integration of home-based caregivers with staff in centres would provide important incentives to unregistered childminders to join family day care.

5. Services should build on and extend community resources and networks

Families tend to use both informal and locally-based networks to assist them in performing their many functions. Informal arrangements are by far the most common form of assistance

families use for child care. Help from other members of the immediate family, from the extended family, from friends and neighbours is sought for many purposes and on many different occasions over time. Many of these services are paid for. These services are used because more formal services either are unavailable, are too inflexible to meet their needs, are too costly or because they simply prefer such arrangements especially if children are with people they trust. It should not be the case that such arrangements are the only option available to families and have to be called on regardless of how satisfactory they are. It is for this reason that the Institute takes the view that government provided or supported services should be basic to the routines of all families with young children and that private arrangements should be entered into by preference and not necessity, as a supplement to the basic services available.

Nevertheless, those services that are supported by public funds should be characterised by a high degree of parent participation and control, they should be at least locally based, although work related care should be another option, and they should form part of a range of services available to families in communities such as health and education. In instances where socially supportive networks are poorly developed or where communities are so lacking in resources through unemployment, low incomes or other disadvantages, that further calls for input to the community cannot be met, governments have a responsibility to provide extra resources - finances, organisation, skilled personnel - to encourage and support the growth of informal networks.

The role of local government has been highlighted in recent times as ideally placed to deliver children's services and in Victoria some municipalities have been active in this role. Future participation by local government will need to take in the context of indexed recurrent payments, increased support staff for child care projects and adequate community control.

6. Children's services should be available to families at a cost all can afford

There is definitely a cost factor involved in the extent to which families use early children's services. Costs do not seem to be a deterrent to using pre-schools and most of these do not charge parents more than a contribution towards materials. Costs of centre-based care, however, can range up to \$50 per week and the data show that only high income families use care at such high rates. Informal care arrangements are costly in many cases and the popularity of family day care is undoubtedly attributable to its lower cost to families. It seems that all but a minority of families are able or prepared to pay more than about 8 per cent of their weekly income for child care services, while the vast majority pay nothing or no more than about 2-3 per cent.

Yet high quality child care is costly with recurrent costs of about \$80 per week per child in 1982. Up to 1982 the Australian Government recognised that child care was an expense beyond the means of most families and subsidised its provision. It is essential, in the Institute's view, that the Australian Government regard the provision of child care as a basic service to families and that it increase its financial contribution substantially. In countries comparable to Australia, this principle is accepted. In Sweden parents pay an average of 10 per cent of full costs of care, in Hungary and West Germany the rate is about 15 per cent, and even in the United States the maximum parent fee is about 70 per cent (Brennan, 1983).

The Institute believes that the most appropriate way to increase access to high quality care at an affordable cost to families is to provide increased funds for services. These services may be centre-based or home-based, as in family day care, but only if such home-based services are upgraded as described previously. The Institute is of the view that government subsidies to commercial centres and/or the provision of subsidies direct to families through reduction of taxable income or the payment of

vouchers, are inappropriate uses of public funds.

In the case of commercial centres, the pressure of the profit incentive is all in the direction of reducing costs. Consequently the high cost of experienced and trained staff, staff for specialist needs, equipment, maintenance and even food must be minimised, requiring the strict oversight of an elaborate set of standards and inspection procedures. As parent involvement is a principle the Institute supports, it cannot support commercial child care where control rests in private hands. If commercial centres were not offered a set subsidy per place, but a more open-ended scheme involving making application for equipment, special programs, etc., the spectre of private fee-for-service medicine would be conjured up with all the attendant problems of cost control and close bureaucratic oversight to prevent abuse. If adequate not-for-profit services are available, the Institute can see no justification for any form of subsidy to commercial child care services.

In the case of tax concessions and/or vouchers, there is some validity in the argument that such provision might stimulate the development of services in areas where none exist, eg. rural areas. Against this however, are the problems that taxation concessions, even in the form of rebates, are regressive and their benefit cannot be directed toward specific modes of service. Vouchers overcome these problems if they can only be used at approved centres or family day care schemes and they may be issued to non-taxpaying families.

On balance, the Institute regards the most appropriate method of increasing the availability of services at an affordable cost to be the payment of subsidies directly to approved centres and agencies such as local government-run family day care schemes. The provision of broader services such as occasional care, out-of-hours care and 24 hour overnight care, should be developed as extensions of these mainstream services. In the case of communities with poorly developed services, the emphasis should

be on identification of need and the creation of appropriate services and not on the payment of subsidies direct to families.

7. In developing an integrated system of early childhood services, variations and anomalies in the conditions under which staff are appointed should be rationalised

While the Institute is not as well placed as others to comment on the complex issues of appropriate training and pay rates and conditions of employment for staff, it is concerned that another impediment to the development of comprehensive and integrated services persists because of the multiplicity of existing arrangements in these areas.

It is important that variations, at least in working conditions and hours, be removed in centres where staff with different qualifications work side by side. As most workers are covered mainly under State awards and may not be eligible for consideration by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, the State Government has an important responsibility to act in this matter.

In light of British findings about the poor quality of the childminders as opposed to nursery school teachers, (Mayall & Petrie, 1977) we would urge integration of informal care with formal pre-school services. In this way trained pre-school teachers could serve as 'the experimental growing edge' for developing new and better child care provisions. Crucial to such provisions would be a research and development component linked with training courses at TAFE and advanced education colleges.

Governmental responsibility for children's services

The following suggestions relate to where the responsibilities for the provision of children's services should rest, or rather how those responsibilities should be apportioned between Commonwealth and State governments, and others involved.

1. The Australian Government should maintain and extend its involvement in the provision of children's services

It is clear that the Australian Government must maintain its involvement in the provision of early childhood services for three reasons. Firstly, the overall level of provision must be increased. As society in general benefits from an investment in resources to improve the development of any generation of youngsters, it is reasonable that the broad community contribute to the cost. The most equitable way to spread such costs is through the taxation system and the Commonwealth Government is therefore responsible for ensuring such an increase in the level of provision.

Secondly, only the national government can ensure that services across the country are provided at an appropriate developmental standard. Differences between States and between particular communities will mean that some children and families might have excellent services provided for them while others will have little or nothing. It is an important equity principle that all children and families should have access to high quality care and this cannot be ensured if either States or local communities are left to fend for themselves or resources are to be allocated on the basis of those who are the most informed or best organised.

Thirdly, there must be the opportunity for innovation and the meeting of special needs. In recent years groups representing Aborigines, migrant groups, disabled children and isolated communities have demonstrated that special consideration should be made in the provision of services to meet their particular needs. Similarly, quite different service needs have emerged apart from the standard child care and pre-school programs. Before and after school care, 24 hour overnight care, care in refuges etc. have been provided in an ad hoc way and have diverted much needed resources away from mainstream children's services. Instead of competing for committed funds, projects responding to emerging problems or new approaches should be able to be developed in their own right. As the development of any

services such as these will not occur on a widespread basis, only the national authority is well placed to disseminate the outcomes of new approaches.

2. Provision of early childhood services should be the responsibility of a community services authority

The Institute is of the view that at both Commonwealth and State levels early childhood services should not be regarded as residual welfare services. The previous Commonwealth Government, by insisting that subsidised services be targetted to those it deemed to be the 'most needy', thereby stigmatised both the services and the recipient families. The Institute believes that child care should be regarded as a basic service available to all families and should be administered as such.

Consequently, there is a need for the machinery of government to reflect this mode of thinking.

At the Commonwealth level, there is good reason to suggest that the income support functions of the Department of Social Security (DSS) should be separated from the service provision function. A separate department specifically administering human services should be established, leaving DSS to concentrate on income support. The consequent split in functions should eliminate the tendency of those providing goods or services to think in terms of 'worth' or to require proof of need on the part of service users.

At State level, the Institute regards the current auspice of the Health Commission to be inappropriate for the development of a comprehensive system of children's services. While the educational aspects of early childhood services are regarded as an integral and most important component, the Institute also believes that education should not be the responsible authority. As these services relate to a wide range of individual, family and community needs, the Institute regards the most appropriate auspice to be one which concentrates on the development of

community processes, in this case the Department of Community Welfare Services.

The Institute regards the idea of a statutory authority such as a Children's Commission as having considerable merit, especially at the Commonwealth level. The advantages of such a Commission lie in the ability of such a body to concentrate solely on carrying out its statutory responsibilities without having to compete for resources with other areas of a functional department such as Social Security. It is recognised that such a body must have resources to allocate as it sees fit and not be merely in an advisory or co-ordinating role. Consequently, as the Institute sees no immediate prospect of a separate Commonwealth Children's Commission being revived, it views the creation of a functional department with the responsibility of developing services and programs as being the best practical option.

At State level, the Institute again regards the establishment of a separate statutory authority as a move with considerable advantages, but only if such a body controlled funds. There is clearly a need for the Department of Community Welfare Services, if it is to be responsible for the development of early childhood services, to establish formal co-ordinating and consultative mechanisms with other departments such as Education, Health and Local Government.

3. All levels of government - Commonwealth, State and Local - should share the responsibility for providing high quality early childhood services

As mentioned above, the Institute believes the Commonwealth Government must significantly increase its contribution toward children's services. Brennan (1983) shows that the amount spent by the Commonwealth on such services was \$380.5 million between 1974 and 1980. This figure represented only 43 per cent of the target of \$885 million originally suggested by the Social Welfare Commission in 1974. The Institute believes the Commonwealth

should reintroduce funding programs on both capital works and in meeting recurrent costs on an indexed basis.

State governments have not been prepared to expend their own funds on child care although increasingly have paid the bills for pre-school education. Whereas in 1975-76 the Commonwealth contributed 60 per cent of total national funding for pre-schools and the States 40 per cent, by 1981-82 the relative proportions were 25 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. The Victorian Government, however, makes little contribution to other children's services apart from some day nurseries. Finally, if local government is to play the important delivery role envisaged for it by some, it must also examine the low level sporadic effects it makes generally in contributing to children's services.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Institute regards early childhood as a stage that is one of the most crucial for the development of the youngsters themselves, their families and for the community. The services developed for young children and their families should be regarded as fundamentally important and not treated in a niggardly or residual fashion. We hope that the Committee of Review and the Victorian State Government can now begin a process of building a high quality, integrated system of services available to all families. For the final comment we cite Jerome Bruner to summarise the importance of the above task:

The importance of early childhood for the intellectual, social and emotional growth of human beings is probably, as Lord Bullock once put it to me, one of the most revolutionary discoveries of modern times ... This is not to say that the object of the years before school is only to ready him for work. The object of education at any age is surely broad and plural: to produce competent

and zestful human beings who can manage their own lives and contribute to the common good while doing it ... The issue is not whether there should be pre-school provisions. They are here. The questions are, rather, what kind of pre-school care, and whether we are ensuring that they are good enough to foster the healthiest growth possible ... Unless the broader issues of policy are taken into account, we shall fail to provide the best setting in which children can grow. (Bruner, 1980:10-11).

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